

POLICING FOR WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Authors:

Kirsty Allen

Special Projects Manager, International Women's Development Agency Inc (IWDA)

Helen Hakena

Executive Director, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA)

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Part 1 General Overview: Kirsty Allen

“Up until now the police department practices towards domestic violence reflected the attitude that family violence was a private matter. It was none of their business. If and when police did respond, they merely separated the parties and left”.

Helen Hakena, LNWDA¹

“Police who recently raided a brothel in Port Moresby may have entered the premises without a search warrant... The arrested "prostitutes" were made to walk to the Boroko police station chewing and blowing on condoms found in their possession during the raid. Allegations have been made that some of the women were raped repeatedly by drunken police in uniform during the more than 48 hours the women were detained”²

Introduction

These quotes illustrate two aspects of women's interactions with police in Papua New Guinea. On the one hand, utter indifference to the needs of women experiencing domestic violence. On the other hand, actual victimisation at the hands of the police.

Papua New Guinea could be considered a country with much room for improvement in policing for women.

Background

Papua New Guinea is Australia's closest, and some would argue most strategically and historically important Pacific neighbour; Australia's only ever colony, and the largest beneficiary of Australian aid.

The people of Papua New Guinea, approximately 5.5 million people, comprise over 700 language and cultural groups. These are spread across a large, mountainous and generally inaccessible landmass. PNG achieved independence from Australia in 1975. Prior to and since then PNG has experienced rapid changes. These include urbanisation, natural resource exploitation and industrialisation in some parts of the country.

The police service, known as the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) went from being a force whose primary task was quelling tribal fights to being a civil Constabulary with responsibility for enforcement of the law, preservation of peace and good order and the protection of the people of PNG and their property³.

The law and order system that the RPNGC is tasked with enforcing overlays a complex system of traditional clan-based customary law and ways of redressing wrongs, involving communal notions of reciprocity and strict clan loyalty. The *won tok* system, as it is known, can at its best provide a

¹ Helen Hakena/LNWDA 1998 p23. Unpublished paper for Assessing Strategies and Services to Reduce Gender Violence Project, IWDA.

² <http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2004/576/576p17.htm> accessed 23 March 2005

³ A brief history of the police force, The National, 12 Sept 2000, sourced from <http://www.pngevents.org.pg/natsupp.html> accessed 13 July 2005

strong support network, but at its worst can contribute to violent inter-clan conflict in the cause of exacting retribution for disputes.

Like much of the public sector including the health and education sectors, the RPNGC is notoriously under-resourced. The total number of police across the country is fewer than 5500 personnel; at a ratio of 1 police officer per 1000 people (compared to Australia's ratio of ~ 1 per 400⁴) and operational resources are also extremely limited. Police vehicles are often off the road simply due to lack of money for petrol.

An example of this lack of resourcing and the comparative budgets of the PNG and Australian police is given in an article in The National newspaper discussing the Australian Government's Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) with Papua New Guinea. A major element of the ECP was to involve the deployment of 200 Australian police alongside PNG police. The ECP is described as costing around A\$200 million (around K100 million) per year for those 200 Australian police. In comparison to this the annual budget of the whole PNG Police force is about K120 million (around A\$238 million).

This lack of resourcing for the most basic police operations is acknowledged as a major constraint to improving the quality of policing. Martha MacIntyre describes the problem as follows:

*"There is constant talk about government responses to 'law and order' but no funding for improvements in policing. It is no use training people stressing improved performance and response when basic facilities are inadequate – phone bills unpaid mean that station phones are cut off and people cannot contact the police by phone"*⁵.

Allegations of corruption are common as are allegations of police violence against alleged criminals and the community at large. Gun running is a more recent element of alleged police illicit activity⁶.

PNG has rates of domestic violence and violence against women that are among the highest in the world. One argument is that this is partly due to the pressures of rapid changes to lifestyles and the influx of western ways and the market economy. Another is that traditional views of women and of ways of settling disputes contribute to these high rates also. Whatever the causes, violence against women in the home and in the public sphere is endemic in PNG.

Women experiencing violence in PNG may be living in rural and remote areas, urban or industrialised centres and everywhere in between. They may be subsistence farmers, professional workers or one of the growing numbers of sex workers concentrated near transport routes in mining, logging and oil exploration areas and around commercial and industrial centres like Port Moresby and Lae. Sex workers may be especially targeted; even by the police who, with others, on the one hand often demonise sex workers as AIDS carriers and on the other view them as fair game for rape and other violence. MacIntyre confirms:

⁴ Total sworn officers 46,369 as at 30 June 2002, www.aic.gov.au/policing/stats/pol2002.html accessed 19 August 2005. Australian population in 2005 approximately 20 million people.

⁵ Macintyre, Martha. 2000 p 36. 'Violence and Peacemaking in Papua New Guinea: A Realistic Assessment of the Social and Cultural Issues at Grassroots Level.' *Development Bulletin*, No. 53. October, pp. 34–7

⁶ See for example PNG: Claims Police Supplying Guns, From Pacific Magazine, 18 February 2005, <http://www.pacificmagazine.net/pina/pinadefault2.php?urlpinaid=14513> accessed 16 August; and Singirok, J 2005, p 5 The Use of Illegal Guns: Security Implications for Papua New Guinea, State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion paper 2005/5.

Police killings and police violence against suspected offenders are common occurrences. The majority of public complaints against police are for acts of violence”⁷

Women’s Interactions with Police

Everything experienced by the PNG community generally in their interactions with police, the women of PNG could be said to experience to a greater degree. This includes not only simple neglect of their complaints but actual violence committed against them by Police.

The relationship between police and the public and with women in particular is often an antagonistic one. Police have a reputation for being dismissive of women’s needs and of themselves violating women’s rights in their personal and professional capacities. The attitude towards sex workers is particularly difficult as evidenced by an incident occurring in 2004, described in the earlier excerpt from a news story:

Responding to this incident Lady Carol Kidu, currently the only woman MP in the PNG Parliament expressed the view that there was an urgent need for a human rights body to be established in PNG. She suggested that increased poverty means prostitution will not go away. Further, that in this alleged incident women and men were treated differently and many of the male clients were allowed to go home.⁸

Women requiring the assistance of police in cases of violence or sexual assault are likely not to receive it. This is a fact acknowledged regionally, within PNG and even within the RPNGC. For example a female Chief Inspector of the RPNGC notes

“...a marked reluctance for police to deal with the issue of family violence. Women reporting family violence are more often than not sent away.

“The only guidelines in existence dealing with family violence are internal guidelines for incidents of family violence that occur within the Constabulary. Once the Constabulary recognise and act on the issue of family violence within the ranks and do so with transparency then the public can have confidence in reporting incidents of family violence knowing that they will be acted on according to the law.”⁹

However a recognition on the part of police of the serious nature of domestic violence may not be enough to improve their responsiveness to women. As MacIntyre describes,

“Police are all familiar with the idea and the slogan that domestic violence is a crime, yet the problems of police inaction, of sending women complainants away, persist. Policemen themselves are among the worst perpetrators of domestic violence”¹⁰.

Current and recent initiatives to improve the quality of policing in PNG.

There have been and continue to be a number of initiatives aimed at improving policing in PNG generally and in terms of the needs of women in particular. One is the Royal PNG Constabulary

⁷ Macintyre, M *op cit* p34

⁸ <http://www.png-gossip.com/news/g040416.html>, accessed 23 March 2005

⁹ Yawa, Miriam, 2002 *Gender and Violence*, paper delivered at Third Australasian Women and Policing Conference: Women and Policing Globally October 2002.

¹⁰ Macintyre, M *op cit* p36.

Development Project, funded by the Australian government through AusAID, and implemented over twelve years. This project recently completed its third phase.

The project had a gender component, which aimed to “develop inclusive activities that support women, and raise awareness with male colleagues of women’s needs and the benefits for men and the agency of ensuring that women have the opportunity to participate fully in the work of the organization”¹¹. That is, the focus was on *women in policing*. One of the outputs of this was the development of equal opportunity policies in the RPNGC.

At the same time, the Australian Government’s larger law and justice program supported implementation of the Policewomen's Networks strategic plan which included gender training for police officers. The overall aim of this was to improve the Royal PNG Constabulary's awareness of gender related issues in policing and law and justice.¹²

The Australian Government’s Enhanced Cooperation Program with Papua New Guinea came into being in mid-2004. It largely involves the placement of Australian public servants, including legal specialists within government departments, economics and finance specialists, border protection and transport specialists in PNG government departments and agencies.

Until some months ago there were also up to 200 Australian Federal Police working within and alongside the personnel of the RPNGC. All these police had been deployed to Port Moresby except for 19 who had been deployed to Bougainville. This part of the ECP has been discontinued and all Australian police placed through the program have returned to Australia.

Community Policing

Community policing, long established in many countries and communities is becoming more accepted in PNG, at least as evidenced by the small number of community policing initiatives currently underway, as part of donor-funded programs and RPNGC programs. Community policing, as a philosophy can be understood as

*"a department-wide philosophy of full-service, personalized and decentralized policing, where citizens feel empowered to work in proactive partnerships with the police at solving the problems of crime, fear of crime, disorder, decay, and quality of life."*¹³

Or, put more simply as the South Australian Police Mission and Corporate Goals ~1996/7 put it community policing is:

*"...police, service delivery agencies, businesses, local authorities and the community working together to resolve crime and safety issues..."*¹⁴

Current initiatives include a joint NZAID-AusAID law and justice sector strategy in Bougainville. The *Bougainville Community Policing Project* is based at the Selau/Suir Community Policing Centre at Kokopau on the northern tip of mainland Bougainville and includes the deployment of five NZ police, scheduled to run through until 2007. This also included Australian Federal Police Personnel through the ECP until their withdrawal earlier this year.

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¹² AusAID Annual Report 03-04 <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/anrep04/s2b.html>

¹³ <http://faculty.ncwc.edu/toconnor/205/205lect13.htm> accessed 10 August 05

¹⁴ <http://www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/cje/html/codes/codes-international/Australia/sapol.html> accessed 10 August

The RPNGC's own Community Policing Program has community-policing units set up in Lae Metro, Morobe, Madang, East Sepik and Sandaun. In Lae, community police post in Huntia Compound a partnership between RPNGC and Arnott's Biscuits who constructed the post on their land. In Wewak, East Sepik province, the East Sepik Council of Women (ESCOW) works closely with this initiative.

An example of work at the other side of the equation, that is the "client" side, Save the Children Australia (SCA) are currently supporting the *Poru Sapot* project which focuses on addressing and slowing down the rate of HIV infection. An important element of this project addresses the interactions between police and sex workers, and police and gay men. These activities have mainly taken the form of facilitated meetings between police and these two highly vulnerable groups but SCA hopes to move to training for police on the recently enacted HIV/AIDS Act (HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Bill 2003). This law outlaws discrimination and stigmatisation of people living and presumed to be living with HIV/AIDS, including women working as sex workers.

Despite these welcome initiatives huge gaps still exist in working with police and communities together in order to make policing work better for women in PNG – both those seeking assistance from police and those coming into contact with police through their involvement in sex work.

Other examples do exist where community-based groups have worked with police – sometimes even successfully – to improve the responsiveness of police to women's needs and to reduce violence against women in the community. One of these examples comes from Bougainville where for a number of years IWDA worked with Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA) with AusAID support on a project covering education across the whole community on women's and children's rights, home brew awareness and recovery from trauma. In this and in other projects LNWDA has provided training to police and has seen results.

Part 2 Case Study – The Experience of Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency of working with police in Bougainville for more effective and positive outcomes for women: Helen Hakena.

Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency was formed in 1992, initially to supply clothing and supplies during the Bougainville blockade. Since about 1995 LNWDA has been working closely with the community to address the lingering issues of trauma and violence including by bringing together young men and women to talk about the effects of the blockade and speak openly about the use of rape and guns.

LNWDA has for many years included the police in its work, providing gender sensitivity training to police and helping to increase the understanding of and respect for women's rights among police and the community generally.

Working with police has been really positive for us as well as for victims. For example Women's Desk was established to provide a coordinated response and ongoing support to women and children who are victims of violent crimes. The desk was a way of linking all NGOs providing counselling services to victims to share their skills, resources, expert assistance, advocacy on issues, lobbying governments for policy changes. It's a mechanism for cooperation between the police and those agencies providing support services to women and children experiencing violence.

The NGOs that are members of the Women and Children's Desk follow a weekly roster and are on call 24 hours seven days a week. When a woman victim comes in to the police station during the weekend or after hours the police call or go to pick up those that are rostered for that period.

The desk provides confidential counselling for victims and does referrals to hospital, and so on. A children's doctor and a nurse who are linked to the desk are called on to check the victim at the desk. The victim does not go to the hospital but the doctor comes to see, treat and give a medical certificate. If the victim is badly hurt, she is taken to the hospital. The desk is accessible and less traumatic for the victims. It is user friendly.

With the recent establishment of the Autonomous Government for Bougainville, powers need to be drawn down from the National Government. The NGOs involved in the Women and Children's Desk must influence the government to give priority to powers that protect women and children. Our statistics on domestic violence and rape are high which demand priority of our government. Working together as NGOs and with the police gives us the strength and power to negotiate. By working together, our networks have been strengthened while at the same time victims have been assisted well.

Victims have the opportunity of choice. The desk is a one-stop place for victims. The service providers come to the victim. Before the centre was set up, the NGOs like Bougainville trauma institute, Catholic family life, Bougainville Provincial aids council, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency and Institutions like the Welfare Services, Health, police and local court magistrates convened several meetings.

There was a concern that victims of domestic violence, rape and other offences were not fully assisted and that each of us worked in isolation. The members of the police have task[ed] one of their female officers to be on standby all the time. The police including the Commissioner have expressed their willingness to support the desk. They have since bought furniture for the desk. The police often collect victims' impact statements from the counsellors to help support the victims in court. The communities have brought or referred clients to the centre for counselling. The information about services provided is also broadcast over Radio Bougainville on LNWD's weekly program.

LNWD has provided a lot of training to the police in Bougainville over the last several years. This has included gender training and looking at issues on domestic violence and its effects on victims. Training has also covered rape, child abuse, basic counselling skills, CEDAW (the UN Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against women), UN Security Council resolution 1325 (on women and peace building) and the PNG Laws that protect women and children.

It's quite interesting training young police on women's rights. The police say it helps them look at the social impact of VAW on women. It sort of balances their outlook on crime. Police have been blaming women and girls previously for crimes committed against them. They have openly told women that it was their fault and send women back without taking their complaints. After the trainings police have now learned to shift their blame to the offender. Our culture also plays a role in shaping these young people's attitudes.

They have been trained about law only. Police response to attending to women needs have been really fast. From previously not seeing domestic violence as a crime, now they do, and they target the offender.

LNWD volunteers have carried out joined awareness and training in communities targeted by police. In the next two months LNWD will conduct two trainings for the police trainers on Gender, VAW, Women's Rights etc. Police are now more sensitive to women's issues. Policewomen and a female nurse interview victims.

In the past, communities were very reluctant to report cases to police because of the “blame-the-victim” attitude of police and feelings of insecurity with police. Communities did not trust police. Now that communities and police are aware of the problems faced by the victims, they are very helpful and handling these cases with greater sensitivity. Involving policewomen in investigations is an important part of this. Communities have now set up law and order committees in villages to assist police and NGOs, churches, youth and women are involved in these.

In order to address the issue of domestic violence *within* the police the Police Commissioner and trainer have allocated three days this year for an awareness raising seminar/training on women's issues, targeting police and their families. The Police Commissioner as mindful that a lot of his male police are abusers themselves who needed to be helped first in order for them to fully assist their clients.

Not so long ago a policeman was suspended over alleged sexual assault at the work place – an indication that this is now taken more seriously within the police. Women in communities have greater confidence now in taking up cases with the police.

Female police in particular respond quickly and this was particularly so when the Australian police were here. When the Australian police were here the moral of police and their level of performance was really high. They responded fast to cases because time was managed well and discipline was instilled. On another note, there was not conflict of interest in their work regarding victims. Plus, the Australians had vehicles to move to areas quickly. The interaction of police with communities and the many awarenesses conducted by them jointly with NGOs built the confidence and trust that was lacking for a long time.

The respect the Australian police had for the chiefs, local magistrates and women was important. The status and the respect for the chiefs were strengthened and in return communities respected the police and worked with them. The capacity building of local magistrates by the Australian police helped to bring back the trust in local leadership.

Unfortunately now that the Australian police have left activities by the police like community patrols and community awareness-raising on laws and processes is lower. Young policemen and women now don't have any trainers apart from local trainers.

However, the Community policing program is running really well with joint training of CAP by local police trainers and NGOs. The Community Police program uses the structures that are already in place in communities. For example, the chiefs network, women, youth, churches and NGOs are involved in this program as well.

From the experience of Leitana Nehan there are a few things that can help to ensure that police do a good job for women. These include gender training for police – not just once, but regularly; joint awareness on human rights, women's rights, children's rights and violence against women and setting up Women and Children's Desk to be set up in regions like the one in Buka, to help ensure cooperation between police and other agencies for better delivery of services to those experiencing violence.

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